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George Schmitt Pioneer Aviator



The aspiring aviator, George J. Schmitt, in 1904, at the age of 12

George Schmitt, Pioneer Aviator

1892-1913

By Thomas B. McDevitt

In 1904 the 12-year old boy pictured on the cover had a persistent dream: he wanted to fly. Aviation was in its infancy and George Schmitt wanted to grow up with it.

George J. Schmitt, Jr. was born in New York City on February 8, 1892. He was the son of George J. Schmitt, Sr., a German emigrant who settled in Rutland, Vermont, where he owned and operated the Marble City Bakery. He lived at 5 Royce Street. Young George attended Rutland High School and in the spring of 1910, when he had barely turned 18, he went to New York City to study electrical work at a trade school. It proved to be a brief matriculation. The urge to fly an airplane dominated his life.

Only seven years had passed since Orville Wright, in 1903, had made the first officially recognized flight in history over the sand dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The distance covered was 120 feet in 12 seconds . . . "a flight very modest compared with that of birds", conceded Orville. Later that same day, with Wilbur Wright at the controls, more successful flights were made of 852 feet that lasted 59 seconds. By some quirk, Orville Wright held not the first Aero Club of America's Pilot's License but No. 4. His brother Wilbur held the No. 5 pilot's license.

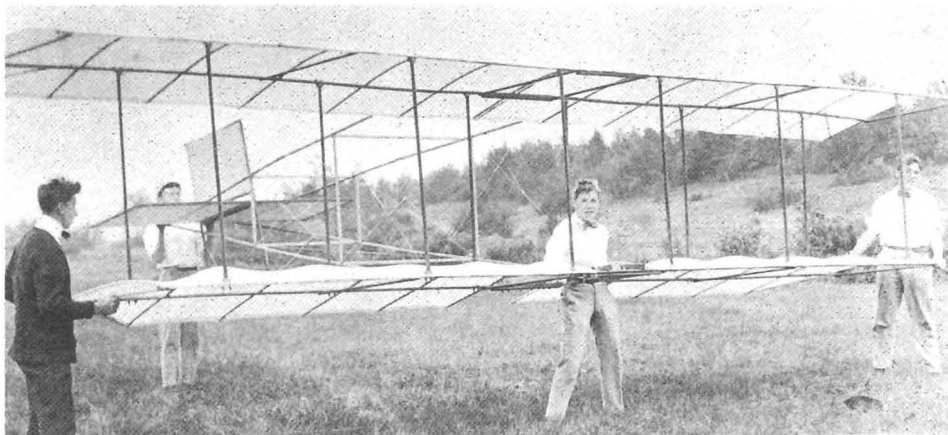
The holder of the No. 1 pilot's license was Glenn H. Curtiss, the third man, after the Wright brothers, ever to fly. It was in the summer of 1908, almost five years after the historic flights of the Wright brothers, that the age of aviation seemed to come alive. Commencing on July 4, 1908, a series of events in rapid succession electrified the world: G.H. Curtiss made a public, officially witnessed, flight of one kilometer (.6214 of a mile) at Hammondsport, New York.

Two years later Glenn Curtiss made a 65-mile flight over Lake Erie. More than 150,000 people witnessed the historic flight. Curtiss piloted a Hudson Flyer open biplane, equipped with a 30 hp engine and a 5-gallon fuel tank. His fastest speed was 64 miles per hour, the slowest 35 miles per hour. The fuel consumption was one gallon in every 15 miles.

To Glenn Curtiss also belongs the credit for being the first to build and market a machine capable of landing and taking off from the surface of the sea. His first successful flight with a hydro-aeroplane was made on January 26, 1911. He went on from that accomplishment to produce an aeroplane named the Curtiss Triad, so-called for its ability to navigate equally well on land, on sea and in the air.

No record of the environment in which George Schmitt grew up would be complete without also mentioning Charles Hampson Grant, a native of New Jersey. He was two years younger than George. Even before moving to Peru, Vermont, at the age of 10, young Grant had built a glider of his own design which flew 128 feet in the street in front of his house. After moving to Vermont, Grant constructed another glider in 1909. The aircraft crashed on its first flight and was never rebuilt. He made his first successful flight in a new, much better glider on August 15, 1910. He continued to build gliders for the next five years. A ruptured eardrum prevented his learning to fly an airplane. Instead, he went on to study engineering at Princeton University and later at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and became a nationally recognized designer of aircraft. He influenced the lives of thousands of American youth in their pursuit of inventiveness and technical achievement through model aircraft building and as editor of the foremost model aircraft magazine of its day. As of 1985, Charles Hampson Grant is still living in the Manchester, Vermont, area. He is 91 years old.

Though earlier aviation meets had been held in Europe prior to 1910, this was the year that flying in America definitely started to accelerate. America's first International Air Tournament was held at Los Angeles under the management of



Glider made by Charles H. Grant, Peru, Vermont, flown in 1912. Left to right: Duncan Grant, James Baird, Grant, and Sam Ogden

Dick Ferris, the actor, on January 10-20, 1910. Among the American aviators who participated were Glenn H. Curtiss, Clifford B. Harmon, Charles K. Hamilton, Frank Johnson, Charles F. Willard and many others, plus a number of the leading fliers of Europe. The meet was held at Old Dominguez Ranch, a few miles south of the city, near Compton. Twenty-five thousand people packed the grandstand, while thousands more milled around the field. Back East, George Schmitt in Rutland, Vermont, no doubt read about the meet with excitement and must have wished he could have been there.

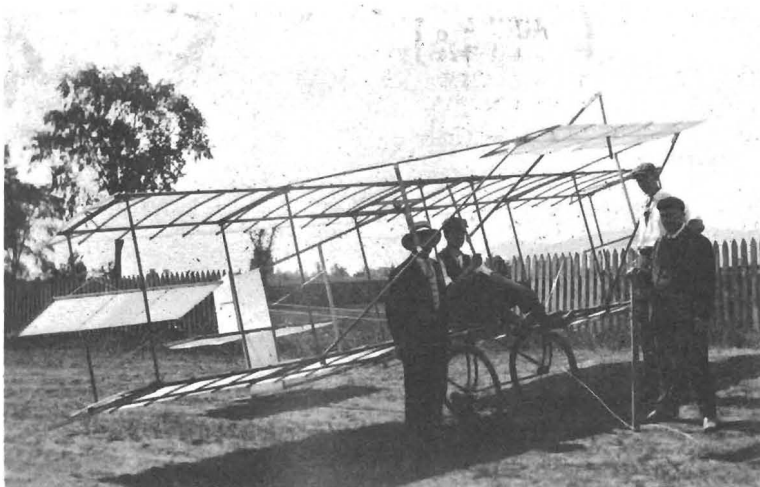
George was an energetic young man, six feet tall and personable. He had a brother, Charles, who was three years younger and even taller. Charles helped George with his self-taught aeronautical projects. Between them, as young teenagers, they had constructed a successful glider in 1909, which gave George, like Charles Grant in Peru, a greater feeling for aerodynamics and a future in the field of aviation. Numerous flights were made with this hang-type glider from a bluff in Buffum's Meadow, which is located in the southeast part of the city. Not all the flights were successful.

So, not suprisingly, in 1910, with the help of brother Charles, George tried-out a later glider at the Rutland Fairgrounds. The **Rutland Herald** reported the event in the August 29, 1910, issue:

The glider belonging to George and Charles Schmitt of Royce St. was given its second tryout at the fairgrounds at 12:30 o'clock before a large crowd. The skids, used in place of wheels, increased efficiency so much that when attached to an automobile by ropes and towed around the track it rose to a height of 20 feet and maintained this height for nearly 100 yards.

By 1910 many people living near the largest cities had attended at least one airplane exhibition. This was not true, however, of people living in the more rural areas, such as Vermont. Up to this time, hot air balloonists and balloon parachute jumpers had been thrilling audiences at county fairs for many years. Now, they were becoming "old hat". The crowds were looking forward to new thrills, which could be provided through the flights of the airplane. The people of Vermont, then as now, were remarkably progressive in their quiet, unpretentious way. The committees for the larger fairs began to think about flights from the race track or the infield in front of the grandstand. Consequently, thousands of Vermonters in the early years of the 20th century had an opportunity to see their first airplane flight earlier than many who lived in similar communities in other parts of the country.

Regional fairs that contracted for exhibition flights in those days included such places as St. Johnsbury, White River Junction, Middlebury, Northfield and Barton. In Brattleboro, the first aviation event occurred in 1912 with, not a flight, but



Glider of George and Charles Schmitt, flown at Rutland Fairgrounds, August, 1910

the return of its native son, Irah D. Spaulding, the first Vermonter to be granted a pilot's license (No. 107). He came home from California at the age of 20. He had just graduated from the flying school operated by Glenn Curtiss near San Diego. After a brief stay, Spaulding left for the Curtiss factory at Hammondsport, New York.

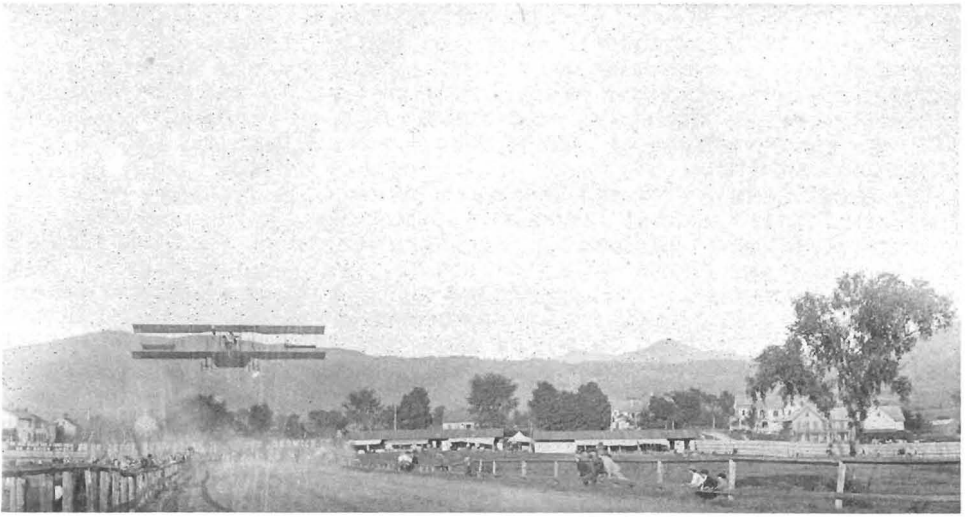
George Schmitt as a student at the electrical trade school in New York City was drawn like a magnet to the flying field at Mineola on Long Island. With financial assistance from his family and several businessmen in Rutland, George purchased a Curtiss biplane from C. and A. Wittemann on Staten Island. He planned to fly the plane that year at the Rutland Fair in September. In those days the small, frail crafts of the period were seldom flown cross-country and never for long distances, except for prize money. Instead, they were designed for quick, easy assembly. The principal components were packed in special boxes and went in a baggage car on the train in which the aviator traveled.

The 40-horsepower Elbridge "Featherweight" engine that George had ordered arrived too late to be installed and tested before it was time to ship the biplane to Rutland. Although George had never flown anything except his glider, he had promised the fair committee that he would try to make a flight.

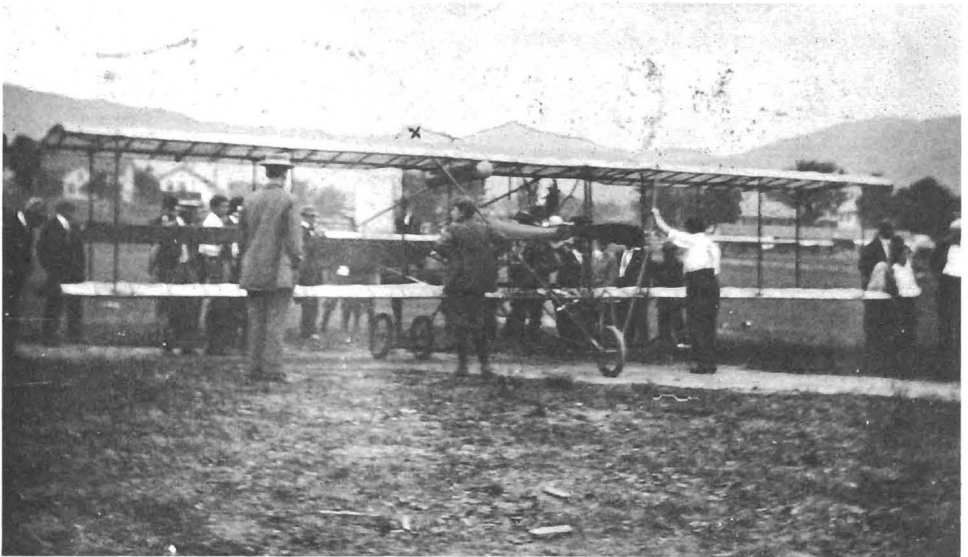
The aviation feature at the 1910 Rutland Fair turned out to be a great disappointment. George tried for two days to start the engine. Two Rutland mechanics, Alfred Frenier and Wayne Clark, tried to help, but failed to remedy the situation. Loose valves caused by "jolting the cars" during shipment to Rutland was given as the reason for the engine trouble.

On what was known as Green's Field in Rutland, a few rods south of the fairgrounds, about where the Travelodge is now located, George finally got his plane off the ground on the third morning of the fair, Thursday, September 8th. He made several hops, which could hardly be regarded as flights and he was never seen from the fairgrounds. His goal to make the first official flight, ever, in the state of Vermont was not achieved.

Also engaged to fly at the Rutland Fair the same September in 1910 was J.C. Storrs of New York City. He had a Bleriot monoplane shipped to the fairgrounds from Bridgeport, Connecticut. It was similar to the type of plane piloted by Louis Bleriot when he completed the first crossing of the English Channel from France to Britain in 1909. Storrs' plane was assembled in the same field as George's, south of the fairgrounds, but bad luck dogged all his efforts to fly and the plane never left the ground during the fair. His engine finally did start on Thursday afternoon but only by accident while the monoplane was still in the tent. Storrs



Credited with the first official air flight in Rutland, Charles Morok takes off from the back stretch of the race track on Labor Day, September 4, 1911.



Close-up of Morok's plane at the Rutland Fair, 1911. Note the X identifying Killington Mountain.

jumped to the controls to shut down the engine, but he did not reach them in time. The propellor blades hit the wall of the tent, tearing part of it into shreds. As neither of the fragile airplanes could be left out of doors, unprotected from the weather, this decisively ended all hopes of the people of Rutland to be the first in the state to see an airplane make a real flight. A day or two later, George Schmitt's biplane and the J.C. Storrs' Bleriot were on their way back to Long Island and Connecticut.

Considerable rivalry existed that year between the management of the Caledonia County Fair at St. Johnsbury and the Rutland Fair as to which would be responsible for the first flight of an aeroplane in Vermont. The Caledonia Fair won the honor with Charles F. Willard and his biplane on September 15, 1910. Willard, age 27, made two flights on that last day at St. Johnsbury. He had come to St. J. on the over-night train from Boston where he had participated in the Boston Aviation Meet at Squantum. He was the nation's first barnstorming pilot and the fourth American to pilot an airplane. He was the proud owner of the United States Pilot's License No. 10. Charles Willard lived to be 93 years old.

In 1911 George Schmitt did not appear at the Rutland Fair. The management engaged the services of Charles Morok, a well-known pioneer aviator of New York City. He had formed a small exhibition flying organization which he called the Morok Aeroplane Company. On Labor Day, September 4, 1911, he took off from the back stretch of the race track. He headed west in front of the grandstand. This was the first official flight in Rutland. After a few minutes in the air, Morok returned and landed his plane on the infield in front of the grandstand. His contract called for flights around Killington, weather permitting, plus two other flights each day to last at least five miles in length. Apparently, weather permitted flights each day except Friday of that week.

Later, in the spring of 1912, Charles Schmitt sent his brother a picture postcard with the following message:

Your rival of last year and peak (x) he should have flown over. Do you want some more of Morok's pictures in the air? Write soon.

Charley

Rutland was not the only fair featuring flying as the main attraction in 1911. At what was called the Vermont State Fair at White River Junction, Charles K. Hamilton was engaged to fly from September 19-22. However, he made only one flight during the entire four days of the fair. On the second day 24,000 people attended, only to be disappointed. On the third day Hamilton was in the air for 11 minutes, while he made a few simple circles in front of the grandstand. All but this one of his planned flights were aborted by bad weather.

Charles Hamilton, who was issued United States Pilot's License No. 12 was a former trick bicycle rider, parachute jumper and glider and dirigible operator. He was a member of the Curtiss Exhibition Company for a time and was regarded as a fearless, sometimes even reckless, flyer, which resulted in many accidents and broken bones.

George was in Mineola the year that Charles Morok was at the Rutland Fair. During that summer of 1911, he became acquainted with Captain Thomas Scott Baldwin. The title was one that Baldwin had given himself for professional reasons when he was a noted dirigible pilot and parachute jumper. He learned to fly at the age of 50 in 1910. Then he organized an exhibition team. He and a number of his pilots flew at Mineola in 1911 when George Schmitt was there. The Baldwin aviators used only special biplanes, somewhat resembling a Curtiss plane. They were built only for Baldwin and to his own specifications by C. and A. Whittemann. Tom Baldwin was undoubtedly an indirect influence on George's development as an aviator.

George was learning to fly the airplane he had just purchased. He made rapid progress, although only 19 years of age. According to the late Ainslee Hassam of North Clarendon, who possessed a large collection of old photographs, newspaper clippings and personal correspondence that traces Schmitt's brief but colorful career, the Rutland flyer was given one of the first air routes, No. 631004, and in his first test flight he remained aloft for 22 minutes at an altitude of 3,000 feet.

He soon became proficient enough as a pilot to form his own company. This he did at Mineola with a man named Henry Thor. Together they formed the Thor-

Schmitt Aviation Company for the purpose of making exhibition flights. An office was opened on Broadway in New York to serve as a headquarters from which bookings to fly could be made. Thor was the business manager in the partnership, although he was an aviator in his own right. George did the flying, as he owned the plane. Thor had some experience in exhibition work, so when a contract to fly was signed, Henry Thor, as advance man, would visit the locality first and attend to publicity and other details.

A full-page advertisement in a trade journal featured a picture of a Curtiss-type biplane in flight. The caption read:

George Schmitt, a Young Novice, Flying in Mineola. His Curtiss-type machine is on the field early and late. Schmitt is but 19, and has the enthusiasm of a boy with a new toy. Old aviators say he has the making of a cracker-jack aviator if he will curb his exuberance, take aviation seriously and not try to learn it all at one.

Schmitt's first exhibition flying was at a fair at Medina, New York, where he made two good flights on August 25, 1911. His next engagement was at the Central Maine Fair at Waterville for three days of flying, beginning Thursday, August 31st. All went well the first day. Then on Friday, the landing wheels of his airplane hit a telephone line and he was thrown from the plane. The machine received only minor damage and George, miraculously, was not injured.

From Maine he and Thor went to Potsdam, New York, where George flew at the Potsdam Fair on September 6, 7 and 8. From Potsdam, George mailed a card to



The Rutland aviator and his business partner, Henry Thor

**RUTLAND COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY, INC.**

RUTLAND FAIRGROUNDS
RUTLAND, VERMONT 05701

February 12, 1973

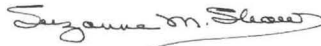
Mr. McDevitt:

Have looked up my records and
find that the Arts and Crafts Building
was built in 1912.

Hope this is the information you
desire.

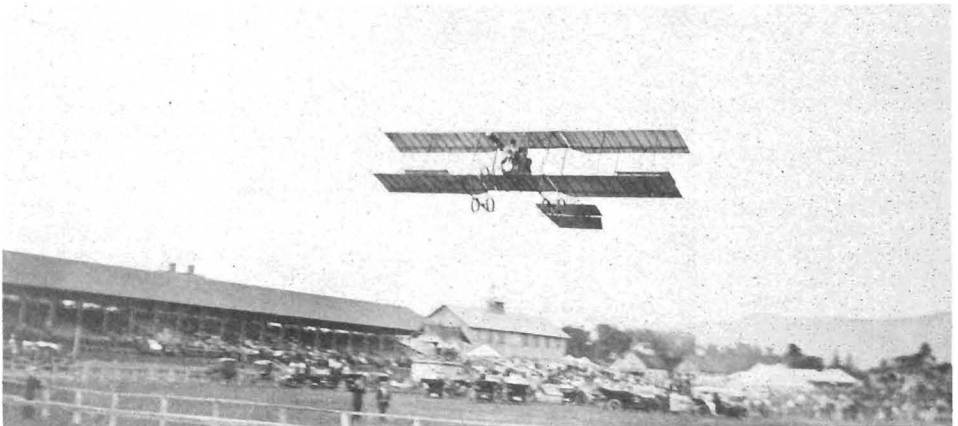
Very truly yours,

VERMONT STATE FAIR



Suzanne M. Shaw
Clerk

Confirmation received by the author proving that the picture, often attributed to Schmitt, was actually of a flight made by Morok in 1911.



This picture has frequently been attributed to a George Schmitt flight at the Rutland Fair, September, 1913. Actually, the flight was one made by Charles Morok in 1911. The planes owned by the two aviators were very similar. The building shown at the center of the picture, directly below the plane is the Horticultural Building. By 1912 the Horticultural Building had been moved back to make room for the new Arts and Crafts Building, erected that same year.

his mother in Rutland, on the back which was pasted a newspaper clipping which read:

AVIATOR MAKES RECORD FLIGHT FROM POTSDAM

George Schmitt Ascends 5,000 Feet . . . Highest Altitude Reached in New York

Special to the Post Standard

POTSDAM, Sept. 13 . . . George Schmitt with the Thor Aviation Company, who has been flying at the Potsdam Fair, flew to-day over three towns in Northern New York. He circled over Potsdam at 5:15 and dropped a note ordering his dinner to be ready at 7:30 o'clock. He started for a cross-country flight over Norwood and other towns in this section.

Schmitt was lost to view behind the clouds, being at times at an altitude of over 5,000 feet. He returned to Potsdam at 7:30 o'clock and was greeted by a crowd of enthusiastic persons. The aviator was carried on their shoulders to dinner at the Albion House. Schmitt uses a 60-horsepower Hall, Scott motor in a Curtis (sic) biplane.

George Schmitt added at the end of the article, in his own handwriting, to his mother, "And we'll do the same thing . . . Over and Over again".

His last date of the season was at the Fairfield County Fair at Danbury, Connecticut, on October 3rd. Here he had another accident, again without injury to himself or much damage to his airplane. His engine failed in flight, forcing him to land in a swamp. After repairing his machine, George shipped it to Rutland where Charles Schmitt put the crated components in storage for the winter. George himself, went to Mineola to join another pilot for a winter tour of the Caribbean Islands. He never flew the Wittemann-built Curtiss again. He instructed Charles to sell the plane for \$500. The April 25, 1913 issue of the trade journal *Aero and Hydro* (page 80) carried the following advertisement:

For Sale: George Schmitt's successful Curtiss-type biplane in crates.

Many extras. Cheap. Charles Schmitt, Rutland, Vt.

Schmitt was engaged to carry mail at the Fort Recovery, Ohio, sixth annual Harvest Festival in August of 1912. This "Aerial Post" had become a daily feature attraction at an aviation meet the previous fall at a new Long Island, New York, flying field called Nassau Boulevard. Mail was collected and postmarked at the flying field and flown to the nearest post office and dropped. It was then picked up and put on a train. Aerial Post was popular from the beginning by exhibition pilots, to increase their profits through postcard sales and larger crowds. Exhibition pilots usually charged a percentage of the gate receipts. The mail stunt, however, is not to be confused with air mail service as we know it today. Such service was not started until May of 1918, with a 200-mile experimental line between New York and Washington.

So, at Fort Recovery on August 6, 1912, "airmail" pilot Schmitt took his plane aloft for a test flight. While in the air the crank shaft broke in two and he was forced to glide in for a landing, minus engine assistance. The part could not be fixed or quickly replaced, so the airmail which had accumulated at the field was taken by hand to the Fort Recovery post office. Another plane was brought in the following day but the jinx persisted. That plane had to be overhauled and work could not be finished in time for the mail flight on Wednesday.

The desperate festival officials . . . now two days behind schedule . . . called in another pilot, Earle Sandt. Known as the "Boy Wonder", he came from Pennsylvania, and, finally, on August 8, the mail at Fort Recovery took to the air. Approximately 1500 cards and letters were canceled at the event. Sandt flew a second day on Friday, August 9th.

George sent a card to his brother, then in New Jersey:

Dear Charles . . .

Write me here at Fort Recovery. Had rotten luck today. Crank shaft broke after the 1st flight. Will lose a wk now and about \$1000.

George Schmitt

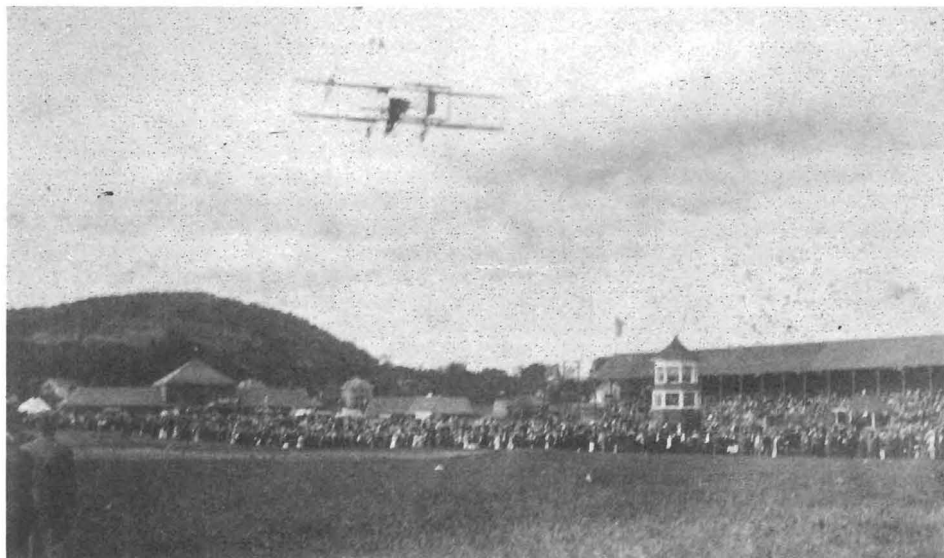
Despite this set-back, earlier in the season George had already established a world's speed record for biplane flying, having flown from Bellefontaine, Ohio, to Kenton, Ohio, a distance of 24 miles in 16 minutes. George's longest cross country flight was from Alliance, Ohio, to Chester, West Virginia, and back, and from

Alliance to East Liverpool, Ohio, a total distance of 164 miles. It was a sensation of the 1912 season in the aerial world.

George Schmitt had promised to include the State Fair in his hometown during the barnstorming season of 1912. He had gone to Rocky Hill, New Jersey, near Princeton, in the spring of 1912 to build a new, better airplane. It was a headless Red Devil-type biplane similar to the airplanes that C. and A. Wittemann were then building for Thomas Baldwin. Charles Schmitt sent Vermont wood for struts and other parts from Rutland. To cover the wings and control surfaces, George used rubberized red cloth he purchased from Captain Baldwin at Mineola. The red cloth, developed by Baldwin, was 33 inches wide and cost 90¢ per yard. Its use led to the name "Red Devil" by which Baldwin planes were known.

Before keeping the September engagement in Rutland, George made two flights a day at the Addison County Fair at Middlebury, Vermont. On August 29th his first flight was forced down by engine failure. His second flight was completed in 16 minutes.

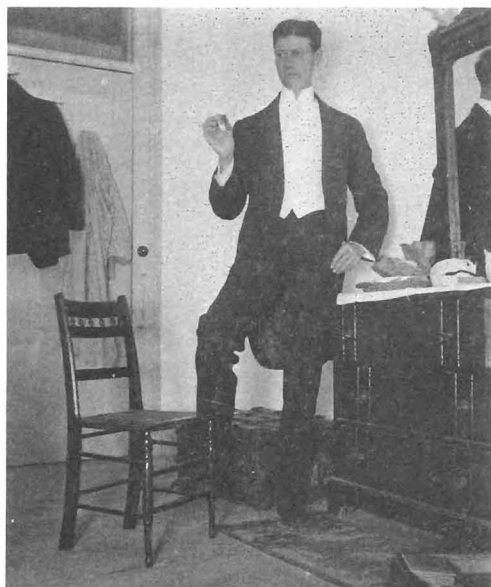
In Rutland on September 2nd, the Red Devil biplane started off a week that was packed with thrills for fairgoers. On September 6, George was given a gold watch by admiring friends. The week was shared with W. Leonard Bonney, who used a Deperdussin monoplane with which he also thrilled fairgoers throughout the week.



George Schmitt at the Addison County Fair in Middlebury, August, 1912

After completion of his engagement at Rutland Fair, Schmitt went to Northfield, to fly at the Dog River Valley Fair, September 10-12. At Northfield, George made the first flights ever seen in the area. He flew on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 10th and 11th. He did not stay for the final day, however, but went to St. Johnsbury, where he flew on Thursday, the 12th, at the Caledonia County Fair. He had been asked to fill in for George Dyott, of the Morok Aeroplane Company, who had met with an accident which wrecked his plane. From St. Johnsbury Schmitt shipped his plane to Mineola, New York. Following that, he and Thor completed plans for a special winter tour of the Caribbean Islands. For this he used a special plane.

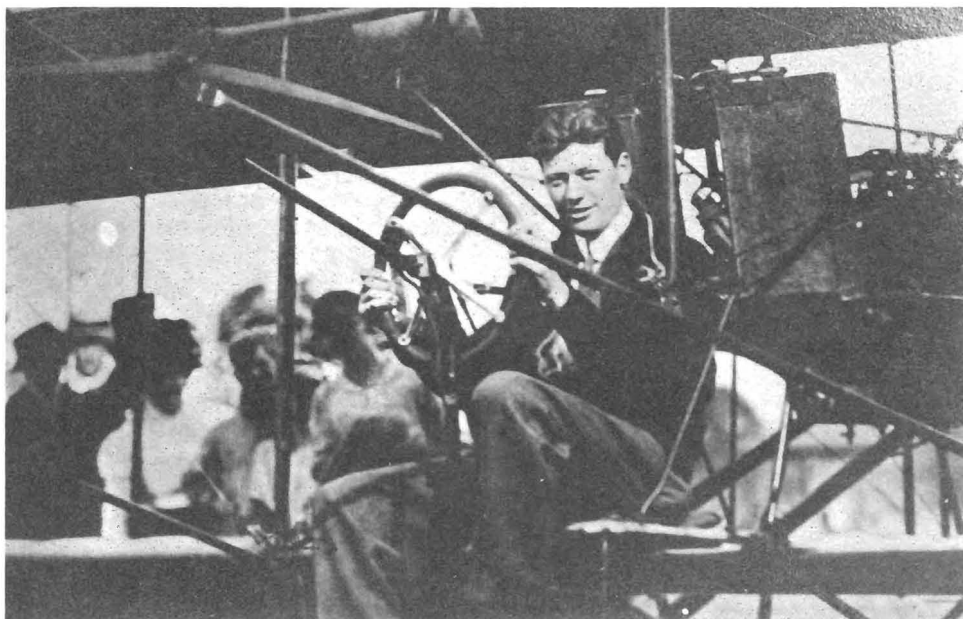
George Schmitt and Henry Thor sailed from New York to San Juan, Puerto Rico, on November 2, 1912. With them they took a true Baldwin Red Devil biplane.



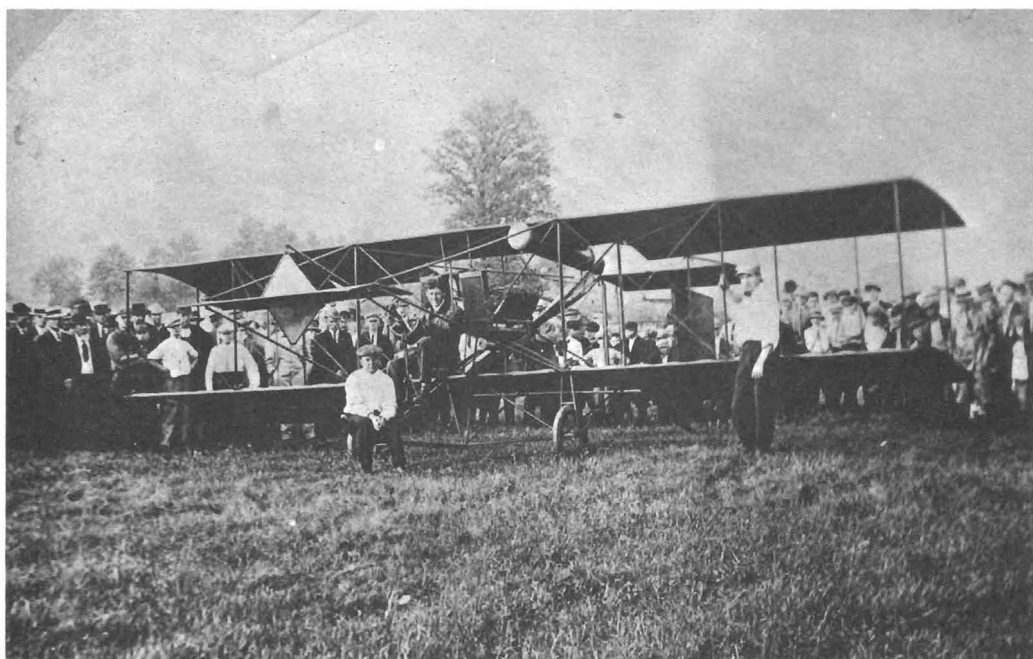
During the Caribbean tour George was idolized by the public and entertained lavishly by high ranking dignatories.

Counting the day's receipts during the Caribbean tour, winter and spring of 1912-13





Schmitt makes his first flight over Rutland at the 1912 fair.



Schmitt's "Red Devil" at Wilson Field, Rutland, 1912

It must have been one of the early airplanes that C. and A. Wittemann had built for Thomas Baldwin, because it had a forward elevator. Like the Red Devil type machine that George had flown during the 1912 season, it, too, was powered by a 75 horsepower Rausenberger engine.

The Schmitt-Thor tour through the Caribbean Islands, Central America and the northern part of South America is a story of success and adventure. George and Thor were idolized by the public and entertained lavishly by high ranking dignitaries wherever they went. It was during this triumphant tour that George made an historic flight, becoming the first aviator to fly from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. This was accomplished by flying across the Isthmus of Panama. The tour came to a successful end when the two men arrived back in New York early in June, 1913.

Tony Marro, reporter, in a **Rutland Herald** article of 1963 recounts the following incident that occurred on that memorable trip:

Now seated in front of a 85-horsepower engine, he roared high over Port of Spain while more than 30,000 openmouthed spectators craned their necks to watch. But upon landing he was placed under arrest as a spy and charged with trying to learn the military secrets of Fort George. Red-faced officials quickly released him and allowed him to give several more exhibitions.

George Schmitt had agreed to return to the Rutland Fair in 1913. On his first day of flying on September first, he made 13 flights, covering a distance of approximately 130 miles. On some flights he carried passengers. They included Joseph Eaton, Wilfred Frenier, and his own father, George Schmitt, Sr. George resumed flying on September 2nd, when he again carried passengers. A sub-station of the Rutland Post Office was set up at the fair grounds by Postmaster Pease. He per-



George Schmitt and friends in front of the "Red Devil" at the 1913 Rutland Fair. From left to right, in the foreground: D. Noyes, Wallace Remington, Schmitt, Ira Watkins, Wilfred A. Frenier.

sonally hand-stamped all the mail brought to him. George then carried the 54 pieces of officially canceled mail from the fairgrounds to the Rutland Post Office. This flight was officially known as Pioneer Airmail Flight No. 66. Subsequently, it was changed to Pioneer Airmail Flight No. 69, because other flights in California and Texas, prior to Schmitt's flight, had not been recorded. Therefore, Schmitt's number was changed to 69.

Following his trip with mail to the Rutland Post Office, George continued to make flights and to carry passengers for the remainder of the afternoon. Sixty people were waiting in line for a ride. Then shortly after 6:00 p.m. the plane soared from Green's Field, south of the grounds with Attorney J. Dyer Spellman of Rutland as the passenger. At an altitude of about 500 feet and in plain view of the grandstand, the plane was seen to wobble, then one wing dropped sharply. Plainly out of control, it plunged toward the ground and crashed in a nearby field. The time was 6:05 p.m.

George was crushed by the engine when it broke loose from its mounting. He was rushed to the Rutland Hospital in Dr. W.W. Townsend's car. He died four hours later at 10:02 p.m. Spellman, who was 22 years old, was badly shaken but sustained no broken bones. He recovered.

George Schmitt was Vermont's first aviation fatality. There was much debate as to the cause of the accident. Charles Schmitt explained what had happened in an open letter to the national aviation trade journals:*

When at an altitude of 500 feet, the engine began to misfire. Dirt in the carburetor. George immediately started to volplane (i.e., glide). Spellman, the passenger, lost his head, rose from his seat and stood on the three control wires which passed between his legs. The strain broke the rudder control wire. Then the passenger reached forward and seized my brother's shoulder yoke and pulled it toward him. This, of course, threw the plane in a steep bank. With the rudder gone, George was powerless to straighten again while the passenger hung desperately to the shoulder control. My brother struggled to bring the machine back, but could not



George Schmitt, over the Rutland Fairgrounds in 1913. The grandstand is in the background at the left edge of the photograph. Just beyond it is the new Arts and Crafts Building, which was not yet built in 1911, when Morok flew at the fair.

get out of Spellman's grasp. The plane crashed to the ground. The actual fall was about 200 feet. The radiator fell on George and he died of internal injuries and a broken skull, hip and jaw. He never lost consciousness. Spellman escaped with only a few injuries.

Funeral services for George Schmitt were held from The Congregational Church**with the Reverend Arthur Howe Bradford officiating. The services took place on Friday, September 5, at 1:30 p.m. The bearers were: Dr. F.H. Gebhardt, Wilfred A. Frenier, Newman C. Wade, Wallace Remington, Thomas C. Dunn and Arthur H. Eastman. George was buried in the family plot in Evergreen Cemetery, Center Rutland.

George Schmitt lived but a brief 21 years. They were years crowded, however, with more living than many experience in "three score and ten". Despite his youth and brief career, he remains a meaningful and distinctive part of the dramatic history of aviation and the courageous group of pilots who flew those early fragile planes. In 1963 Ainslee Hassam called attention to the 50th anniversary of Pioneer Airmail No. 69. The Rutland County Stamp Club designed and distributed a souvenir cover at the Vermont State Fair at Rutland to commemorate the pilot George Schmitt. In 1973 it again commemorated the pilot, marking the 60th anniversary of his 1913 flight.

* *Aero and Hydro* (September 27, 1913) 484
Aeronautics (October 1913) 156

**The Grace Congregational United Church of Christ since 1969.

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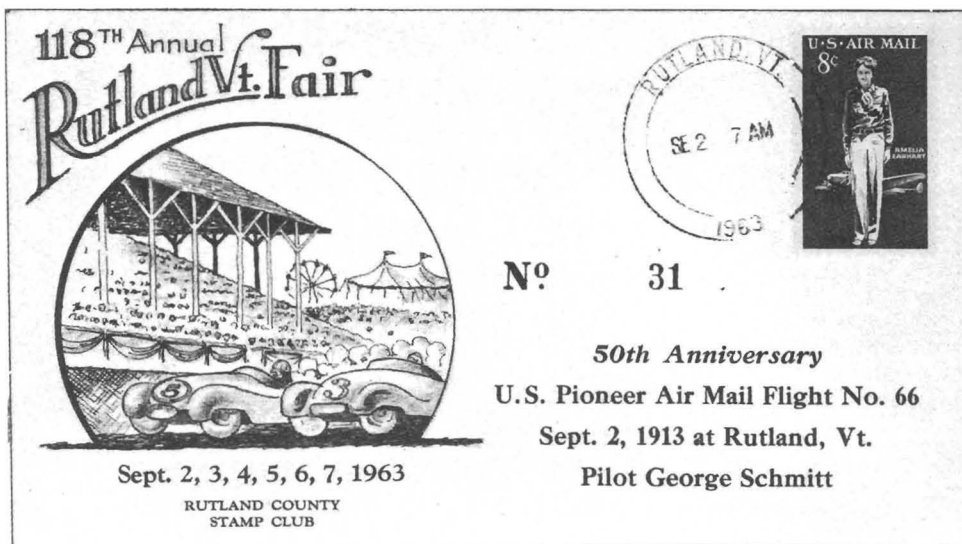
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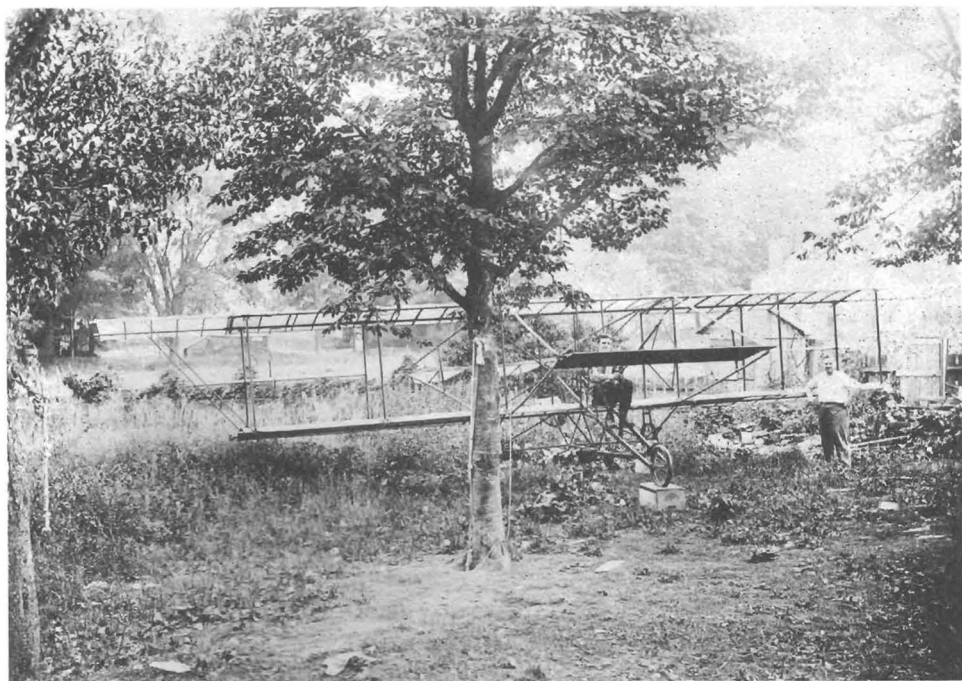
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Villard, Henry Serrano; *Contact, the Story of the Early Birds*



Souvenir covers distributed at the Rutland Fair in 1963 and 1973, commemorating the 50th and 60th anniversaries of Schmitt's 1913 flight.





The novice aviator at age 17. George Schmitt shown here with his father, George Schmitt, Sr.



Crowd surrounding the wrecked plane that killed George Schmitt, September 2, 1913 at the State Fairgrounds, Rutland, Vermont.

AUTHOR

Thomas B. McDevitt is a native of Rutland and was educated locally. He is a member of the Rutland Historical Society before which on occasion he has presented slide programs.



Rutland Free Library

The Rutland Fairgrounds as they looked in 1913, when George Schmitt made his last flight.



George Schmitt, age 21, photographed shortly before his death, September 2, 1913.

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
101 CENTER STREET, RUTLAND, VERMONT 05701
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The Rutland Historical Society was founded in 1969 to preserve, study and disseminate the history of the original Town of Rutland as chartered by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth in 1761, now comprised of the City of Rutland (1892) and the Towns of Rutland (1761), Proctor (1886) and West Rutland (1886). The Society maintains and operates The Rutland Museum in the historic Bank of Rutland building built in 1825, now owned by the City of Rutland, and The Vermont Farm and Rural Life Museum at the Vermont State Fair. A research library and the historical collections are maintained in the Museums and the historic Nickwackett Fire Station. Gifts or bequests of articles of historical interest or money are welcome at all times and are deductible for income tax purposes.

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